Reprint from
SURGERY, GYNECOLOGY AND OBSTETRICS
January, 1935, Vol. 60, 117-119

HARRY MITCHELL SHERMAN

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Harry Mitchell Sherman, the first specialist in orthopedic surgery on the Pacific Coast, was born in Providence, Rhode Island, November 23, 1854. His paternal ancestor came from England in 1633. On his mother's side, the family were descendants of an old French Huguenot family, Mauran by name.

His preliminary education was in St. Paul's School, Concord, New Hampshire, and in 1877 he was graduated as Bachelor of Arts from Trinity College, Connecticut. His medical degree was from the College of Physicians and Surgeons, New York, in 1880, which college later became the Medical Department of Columbia University. In that same year, Trinity College granted him the degree of Master of Arts. His hospital interneship was in Bellevue, New York, and he served for a time as assistant surgeon at West Point Foundry, New York. In 1881, he became assistant to Dr. Murdock at Cold Spring-on-the-Hudson, and later had some experience as ship surgeon on one of the steamships of the Alexandre Line.

In February, 1885, he came to San Francisco and entered practice, soon becoming associated with the late Dr. George Chismore, the eminent urologist.

Since he had had special training in orthopedic surgery with Dr. Lewis A. Sayre in Bellevue, he recognized in San Francisco an opportunity to develop that specialty, which until then had been in the hands of general surgeons.

In 1886, he became orthopedic surgeon to the Children's Hospital, San Francisco, organized in 1875 by a group of women headed by Dr. Charlotte Blake Brown, and he soon made that institution the center of orthopedic surgery on the Pacific Coast.

In 1890, he married Matilda Barreda, daughter of Frederick Barreda, Peruvian minister to the United States. Mrs. Sherman died in 1895, leaving one son, Frederick Barreda Sherman. In 1896, Dr. Sherman spent a year in Vienna, studying orthopedics.

In 1900, Dr. Sherman married Lucia Hamilton Kittle, daughter of J. G. Kittle, of Ross, California. Of this marriage, there were two daughters, Lucia Kittle and Isabel, who, with the son, Frederick Barreda, and Mrs. Sherman, survive.

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Dr. Sherman suffered from asthma for a number of years, but notwithstanding this handicap, he had an unusually full professional life, with great accomplishment. Finally his heart broke down after an attack of influenza, and he died May 15, 1921.

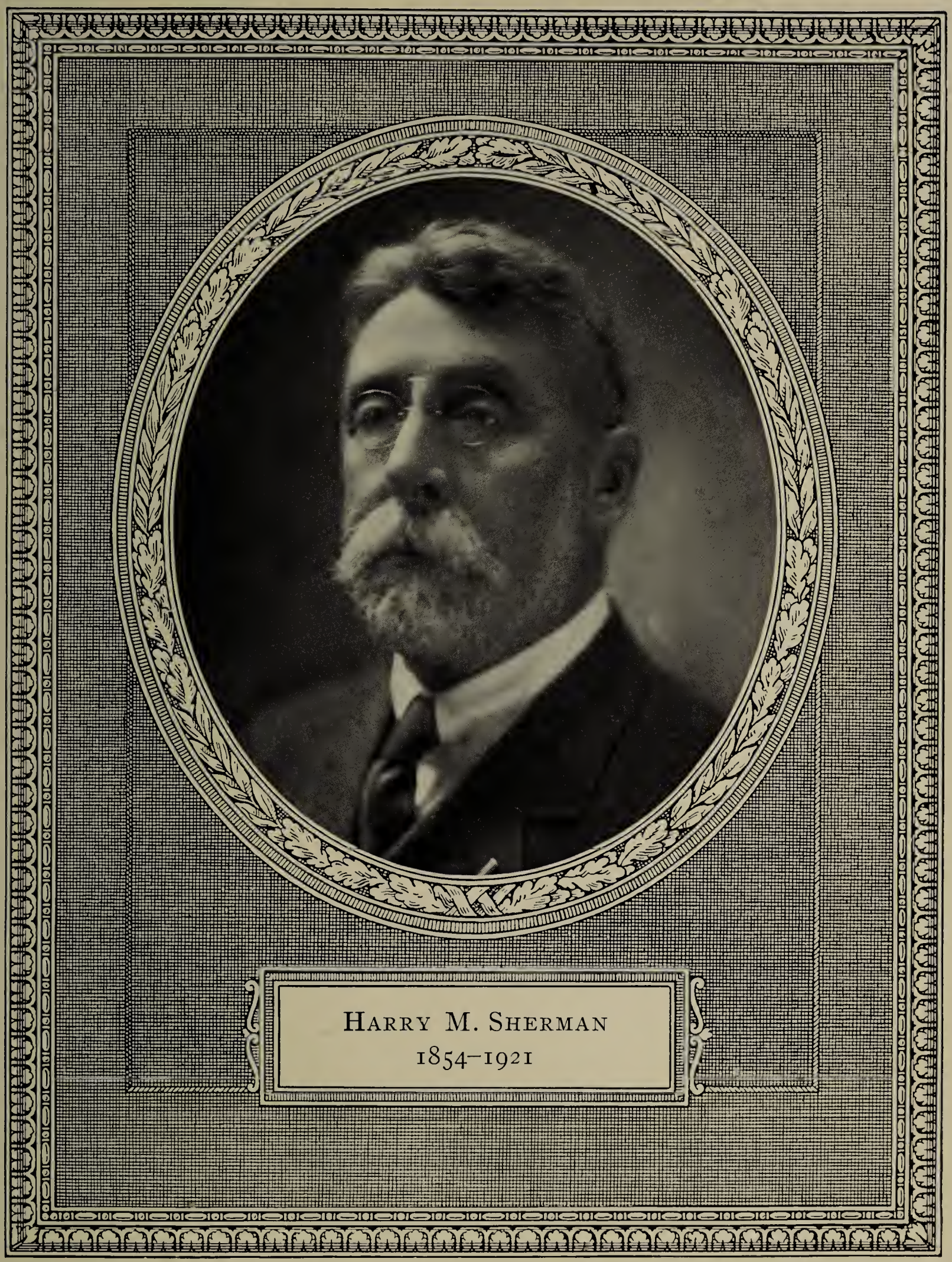
Dr. Sherman was made clinical professor of orthopedic surgery in the University of California in 1896, and professor of the principles and practice of surgery in 1899, which position he held until 1912. In 1901 he was appointed surgeon to St. Luke's Hospital, San Francisco, where he did much operative work. He recognized that in cleft palate work he could see in the depth much better if he had dark instead of white draping. He therefore experimented with colors in the operating room and finally hit upon dark green tiling and dark blue draperies and gowns as most restful to the eye, favoring illumination of the depth of surgical wounds. Like other of Dr. Sherman's original notions, the green color has been chosen for the tiling of operating rooms in numerous other institutions.

He was an active member in many surgical organizations—The American Orthopedic Association, 1899 (president in 1900), The American Surgical Association, 1905. In 1912, he was one of the organizers of the San Francisco Polyclinic and later did yeoman work in organizing the American College of Surgeons in California, of which organization he was one of the governors. It is of some interest to note that after the San Francisco earthquake and fire of 1906, Dr. Sherman was the inspiration for the opening of a teaching hospital for the University of California Medical Department—he started with one bed and one patient, he himself furnishing the equipment—an institution which has become one of the most prominent teaching hospitals in the country.

While Dr. Sherman's chief work was in orthopedics, he did not limit his efforts to that specialty, but did much creditable work in other fields—cleft palate, surgery of the spleen, surgery of tumors, and even brain surgery. He did much experimental work on suture of heart wounds. He operated a number of times for the removal of the gasserian ganglion for facial neuralgia, and it is fair to assume that the broader view of pathological problems thus acquired reacted to the betterment of his orthopedic surgery.

Endowed with tireless energy, he gave much time and thought to matters of public welfare. In his relations with his fellow man, he was always the gentleman in the best sense of the word.

In the late war, having been for some years an officer in the Medical Reserve Corps of the United States Army, he was called to active duty, with rank of major, and served as surgeon in command of the Army Hospital at Fort Rosecrans, San Diego, until the end of the War. As a teacher, and in his clinical work, he was painstaking to an extreme and his private and hospital records are models of concise, systematic work, largely in his own hand.



HARRY M. SHERMAN
1854–1921

Of Dr. Sherman's contributions, perhaps the following are most noteworthy:

Open operation for congenital dislocation of the hip, in which he overcame the usual rotation of the femur by an infratrochanteric osteotomy, holding the fragments in proper position by means of drills or spikes incorporated in the plaster-of-paris dressing. A more fundamental idea was the use of sterile salt solution as a filling for cavities in bones and other places, Sherman making the point that the fluid was eventually replaced by blood into which bone gradually grew, and the irritation from foreign bodies such as the various pastes which had been previously used, was avoided.

He invented an extremely useful instrument, a spreader for opening plaster-of-paris splints.

In 1902 he presented a notable paper before the American Surgical Association on the surgery of the heart.

Dr. Sherman's position as surgeon is not to be measured by his contributions to literature, for they were not numerous, though of telling quality, but by his influence on those who came into contact with him, for they could not fail to catch some of his enthusiasm. He was a careful and thorough clinician, an excellent operator, a splendid teacher, who had the faculty of attracting young men to his work, and it is noteworthy that the present generation of orthopedic surgeons in San Francisco were nearly all Sherman's students.

PRINTED BY R. R. DONNELLEY & SONS CO., AT CHICAGO, ILLINOIS, U.S.A.